

Message Text

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42

ACTION EB-03

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 L-01 SP-02 INR-05 NSC-05 NSCE-00

CIAE-00 TRSE-00 RSC-01 /032 W
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P 241659Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6727

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 769

LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR ETRD CO

SUBJ: AMBASSADOR MAILLIARD'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT LOPEZ:
TEXTILES

1. IN HIS HOUR LONG CONVERSATION WITH AMB MAILLIARD ON JAN 23, PRESIDENT LOPEZ RAISED WHAT HE CALLED "VITAL COLOMBIAN PROBLEMS". AMONG THESE HE LISTED THE TEXTILE TRADE AND THE QUESTION OF UF QUOTAS.

2. REMARKING THAT HE BELIEVED THE COLOMBIAN TEXTILE INDUSTRY TO BE SECOND TO NONE IN LATIN AMERICA, THE PRESIDENT STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INDUSTRY AND THE EXPORT TRADE TO THE ECONOMY. HE STRESSED IN PARTICULAR THE IMPORTANCE OF COTTON TEXTILES, WHICH AMONG OTHER THINGS HE NOTED WAS MORE LABOR INTENSIVE THAN THE SYNTHETICS AND THEREFORE OF BASIC IMPORTANCE TO THE DOMESTIC ECONOMY. ANY REDUCTION IN US QUOTA LEVEL WOULD BE A SERIOUS BLOW TO THE ECONOMY AND CATASTROPHIC FOR THE INDUSTRY WHICH FOUND ITS OVERSEAS MARKETS DECLINING. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE US WISHED TO CONCLUDE A BILATERAL AGREEMENT COVERING ALL FIBERS -- COTTON, WOOL AND SYNTHETICS. COLOMBIA WANTED TO CONCLUDE AN AGREEMENT ON COTTON ONLY, AS IT HAD IN THE PAST, SINCE THIS WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART BY FAR OF THE INDUSTRY AND REDUCED EXPORT LEVELS IN COTTON TEXTILES WOULD BE VERY SERIOUS.

3. AMB VAKY RESPONDED BY REFERRING TO THE TEXTILE DISCUSSIONS
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WITH THE US WHICH WOULD BEGIN JAN 27, AND EXPRESSED THE HOPE

THAT THEY WOULD PROGRESS RAPIDLY AND THAT DECISIONS COULD BE MADE QUICKLY. HE NOTED THAT THE US DOES INDEED CONSIDER IT ESSENTIAL TO CONCLUDE AN AGREEMENT COVERING ALL FIBERS, AND THAT THE WORLD-WIDE MULTIFIBER AGREEMENT OF WHICH THE US WAS A SIGNATORY CONTEMPLATED THAT BILATERAL AGREEMENTS CONCLUDED WITHIN ITS FRAMEWORK WOULD COVER ALL FIBERS. THE AMBASSADOR ADDED THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT COLOMBIA WOULD FIND IT ADVERSE TO DO SO. HE THOUGHT THE UPCOMING TALKS WOULD EXPLORE CAREFULLY THE POSSIBILITY OF FLEXIBILITY TO PERMIT SOME SHIFT BETWEEN CATEGORIES WITHIN A GLOBAL QUOTA. NOR, THE AMBASSADOR ADDED, SHOULD IT BE ASSUMED THAT EXISTING QUOTA LEVELS WOULD BE REDUCED. THE WORLD-WIDE AGREEMENT TO WHICH BILATERALS SHOULD CONFORM CONTEMPLATED PROVISION FOR MARKET GROWTH AND THIS TOO WE WOULD WANT TO TALK ABOUT.

4. THE AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THAT THE THORNIEST PROBLEM MIGHT NOT BE OVERALL QUOTA LEVELS SO MUCH AS THE APPAREL ITEMS (807 ITEMS) WHICH WE DID BELIEVE TO BE A VERY DIFFICULT PROBLEM BECAUSE OF SUDDEN EXPANSION IN EXPORTS TO US. THE PRESIDENT REPLIED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THIS WOULD BE A DIFFICULT ISSUE, AND HE UNDERSTOOD THE REASONS FOR US CONCERN. MANIFESTING HIS OVERALL ANXIETY FOR THE HEALTH OF THE INDUSTRY AND ECONOMY, THE PRESIDENT EXPRESSED HIS HOPE FOR US UNDERSTANDING AND HELP IN THE UPCOMING TALKS.

5. COMMENT. THE PRESIDENT DID NOT GET INTO SPECIFICS OR TECHNICALITIES, AND HE SEEMED TO RECOGNIZE THE SERIOUSNESS AND DIFFICULTIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE 807 ISSUE. HIS MAIN CONCERN, HOWEVER, APPEARED TO BE WITH REGARD TO OVERALL QUOTA LEVELS RATHER THAN 807, AND HE IMPLIED A CONCERN THAT A MULTIFIBER AGREEMENT WOULD MEAN LOWER COTTON LEVELS THAN UNDER A SPECIFIC COTTON AGREEMENT. HE APPEARED TO BE SATISFIED WITH OUR COMMENTS. THE PRESIDENT'S MOOD AND ATTITUDE WERE VERY REASONABLE AND CALM. INDEED, WE HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT HE WILL BE VERY RECEPTIVE TO LOGIC AND VERY UNDERSTANDING OF OUR PROBLEMS AND NEEDS, AND IN EFFECT IS ASKING US TO DO THE SAME. WE BELIEVE THEREFORE THAT FORTHCOMING TALKS WILL MAKE CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS IF WE APPROACH THEM IN A CONSTRUCTIVE, PATIENT, HELPFUL WAY, WHEREAS A HARD-NOSED "OR ELSE" INITIAL ATTITUDE AND TACTIC WOULD BE PRECISELY COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TEXTILES, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, IMPORT QUOTAS, TRADE AGREEMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BOGOTA00769
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750027-0847
From: BOGOTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750124/aaaaavbg.tel
Line Count: 108
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05 SEP 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <19 NOV 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AMBASSADOR MAILLIARD'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT LOPEZ: TEXTILES
TAGS: PFOR, ETRD, CO, US, (MAILLIARD, WILLIAM S), (LOPEZ MICHELSEN, ALFONSO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006